

BW286
S4S3

Sabbath Temperance
Meetings Inscriptura,
W. J. Shrewsbury.

RJS

Wes 961

BW/286

S4 S3

SABBATH
TEMPERANCE MEETINGS
UNSCRIPTURAL.

BY WILLIAM J. SHREWSBURY,
WESLEYAN MINISTER.

“TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME TO EVERY
PURPOSE UNDER THE HEAVEN.”—ECCLES. III. 1.

BACUP: PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY JOHN DOWNHAM,

LONDON:

W. STRANGE, PATERNOSTER-ROW:

LEWIS, MANCHESTER: WALKER, LEEDS: BLACKBURN, BRADFORD:
JONES AND CROSSKILL, ROCHDALE: AND VICKERMAN, BURY.

BW/286
S453

PRINTED BY J. DOWNHAM, STAMP OFFICE, BACUP.

Wes. 961

SABBATH TEMPERANCE MEETINGS

UNSCRIPTURAL.

THERE are two things desirable in regard to the temperance cause, which, if they could be secured, would invest it with a glory which nothing could tarnish, and secure it a prosperity that nothing could impede. The first is, that all real christians should practically become total abstainers from every thing that can intoxicate; this would be, to themselves, to the church, and to the world, an immense benefit, and would reflect no dishonour on Jesus Christ our Lord. The second is, that all tee-totallers should become christians, and pass from a merely reformed state, or improved habits, through repentance for sin, and faith in Christ Jesus, to the experience of an inward work of regeneration, without which no man can "enter into the kingdom of God."—JOHN, III, 5.

Neither of these results is witnessed. For, on the one hand, multitudes of professing christians have imbibed such strong prejudices against the temperance cause, and have such an unaccountable attachment to long-established usages, and such a settled impression that some kind of stimulating drink, in moderation, is not only necessary but even beneficial, that one might as well reason with a Mahometan against fatalism, as argue with them against alcohol in all its forms. On the other hand, not a few total abstainers are altogether, or in a great degree, unacquainted with the true spiritual nature of the christian religion; their minds are so engrossed with the temperance subject, that they neglect the pursuit, or cultivation, of inward personal godliness. Yet, while unrenewed, and far from Christ and salvation, they are apt to fancy that they are superior to many religious professors, in practical benevolence. Instead of imitating whatever excellence they might, if so minded, discover in christian men, and earnestly desiring the sanctifying enjoyment of the pardoning love of God, they, on their part, contract almost unconquerable prejudices against men of sterling worth, because they oppose, or stand aloof from a cause which has proved such a blessing to thousands, and is destined to hold a place amongst the agencies by which our fallen world is to be brought back to God. Constituted as the human

mind is, such views and feelings cannot excite much surprise in a calm observer. For unquestionably there is at first sight a discrepancy between the profession of christianity and the mysterious habit of sipping strong drinks. I will not attempt to reconcile the contradiction, nevertheless, he who judgeth all things is the Lord. Mutual prejudice however, places the two parties in an unhappy position. It makes those antagonists who might mutually benefit each other. For the church would not lose the smallest degree of her spirituality by being won over to the universal adoption of the temperance principle; indeed it is impossible for any one so much as to form a conjecture in what way the giving up of strong drink for ever should do her an injury. At the same time we must allow that the most strenuous advocates of temperance would sustain no loss, but be advantaged by cautiously avoiding all interference with her privileged province, never encroaching on her sphere of labour, and by subordinating all their movements to her higher spiritual aims.

Now it appears to us that such an encroachment is made when temperance meetings are held on the Sabbath day; for that is a day sacred to the church, and to the christian ministry, that the gospel of Christ Jesus may be published for the salvation of the world. It is therefore necessary on two grounds that such meetings should not be begun by our temperance friends, or where begun should be relinquished. First, in order that the mutual existing prejudice between them and some christian people may not be increased by renewed opposition. For simply practising and promoting total abstinence, we can only be opposed by the mere *opinion* and contrary practice of some good men; but their *conscience* cannot condemn us; they *know* that thus far we do no harm, but good in the world. And the verdict of their own conscience, in thus far acquitting us of blame, is, if they would only give it a full and fair hearing, and weigh the subject in all its vast relations, a verdict against themselves. But Sabbath meetings would make the best men in the land really conscientious opponents to our cause. Let us do nothing that will enlist the conscience of the righteous against us; every thing else in the way of frowns and rebukes we can bear, and their arguments we can meet without fear. But here we cannot answer them. For, secondly, the practice of holding temperance Sabbath meetings is in itself unscriptural, and therefore, as far as it is maintained, God himself will be against us.

It is fitting, then, that all christian tee-totalers (and they are not a few) should make a decided stand against this evil: not in a factious, noisy, contentious manner:—for christianity knows nothing of faction of any kind any where—but firmly, and uncompromisingly, in whatever place their lot may be cast. Yet, if they cannot prevent this evil in their neighbourhood, let them not on that account renounce their tee-totalism, nor be in the slightest degree moved by the additional reproaches and reflections which may be cast upon them by their drinking friends, from the high and exemplary position they

have chosen. There are some, who, in their dislike to tee-totalism, would almost "rejoice in iniquity" in anything connected with the management of it, that they might have an opportunity, after their own fashion, of *shewing up* tee-totalers, and their system, to the prejudiced portion of the community. This is to adopt the infidel's mode of argument at the very time they would make it appear that there is a connection between tee-totalism and infidelity. For infidels are wont to point at the unholy, or defective lives of christians, and then scoff at christianity. Let not christian tee-totalers be caught in the snare. Let them be still assured that there are solid principles of truth in tee-totalism itself, while they steadily endeavour to check Sabbath meetings, and refuse to co-operate with those who hold common principles with themselves, whenever they deviate into the paths of error.

I have been led to the discussion of the subject treated of in this tract by the following circumstance. A short time since, Mr. David Thomas, Minister of the Gospel, at Bury, delivered a temperance lecture, in Rawtenstall, the village where I at present reside. I did not hear him, for I was preaching at one of the country places in my circuit. In the course of his lecture he recommended Sabbath Temperance Meetings, and afterwards circulated a tract, written by himself, professedly to advocate the propriety of holding such meetings on the day of the Lord. I had long known that *occasionally*, and in a *very few* places, this was done, and I always deeply regretted every instance of the kind, of which I read or heard. Still the evil was of such rare occurrence, and lay so remote from my sphere of labour, that I did not conceive that I had any providential call to interfere. I rather was inclined to hope that the practice would soon fall into disuse, and entirely disappear. But when a minister from a neighbouring town sought to promote the same views amongst the people of my charge, I could not hesitate to comply with the request of some of the leading Wesleyans of this place, who are themselves tee-totalers, by writing on this subject; and especially as our brethren, the WHITEHEADS, offered to take the pecuniary responsibility on themselves. I write with my eyes open. I shall be placed between two fires.

Both the friends and opponents of tee-totalism will rally me; from the latter, who will exult and say, "see, in what irreligious company you are found," I shall have renewed taunts; and probably, from some of the former I shall have to endure warfare, where I have hitherto had honour and commendation. But all this signifies just nothing; I am for God and his truth whatever wind blows, and so, coolly gathering up my cloak, I prepare for a storm, not much minding from what quarter it may come.

Standing then, firmly by the position taken on a former occasion, as laid down in the Sermon on PHIL. IV. 8. preached before the

Bradford Temperance Society, and entitled "Tee-totalism tried by the test of Scripture," I now add that Sabbath Temperance Meetings, when tried by the same test, will be found to be unscriptural. Here then, "to the law and to the testimony," ISAIAH, VIII. 20, we once more make our appeal.

1.—Temperance meetings fall short of the high, holy, and spiritual purposes of the Sabbath day. "I was in the Spirit," saith St. John, "on the Lord's day." REV. I, 10. And when in the Spirit on the Lord's day, he was commanded again and again to "hear what the Spirit said unto the churches." REV. II. 7, 11, 17, 29, and III. 6, 13, 22. And the exhortation referred not to himself alone, but took in every individual member of the Christian church. The day of the Lord's resurrection is pre-eminently the day of the Spirit's working and speaking. To that day especially do the words apply, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." When the Apostle was in Patmos, there was no mixing up of other matters, however proper and useful in their place, and on fitting occasions, with the sacred concerns of that day. It was a day for divine revelations, not for moral, social, or philanthropic discussions. Such discussions were not to be grafted on it, because by an indirect and circuitous mode of reasoning, they might possibly be made out to be not alien to some of the secondary purposes for which the Sabbath is established. The Apostle's business on that day was with the churches; for there only the Spirit of the Lord was to be expected, in connection with the appointed means of grace. No public assembling together of the people that is not of a church-character, is, in a christian sense, lawful on this day. Hence, the unlawfulness of all public pleasure-parties, visiting parties, sight-seeing parties, and reading or debating assemblies of any kind, whatever may be their object of political, social, or moral reform. All meetings on the moors, or common, or in the fields, to listen to the harrangue of orators, on that day, are unchristian; such assemblies are without a blessing, for God is not with them; socialists and infidels may be there, but no christian will venture his foot on the unhallowed ground, lest he should die in his iniquity and perish in his transgressions. Nor will the christian sanction by his presence any mere temperance meetings on the Sabbath day, even though, to make it more in accordance with the views and feelings of a certain class of religious people, a temperance love-feast should be announced as a part of the services of the day. And though it would be going beyond the truth to affirm that a Sabbath Temperance Meeting would be open to all the objections that might be urged against the other class of unlawful and unchristian assemblies mentioned just before; yet is it only speaking according to the truth to maintain that temperance meetings would have at best but a mixed object, whereas the Sabbath ought to be, in all public assemblies, devoted exclusively to things spiritual, heavenly, and divine. We repeat therefore this great leading truth, namely, that no public assembly, that is not of a

church-character, is, in a christian sense, lawful on the Sabbath day. This is clear from the whole testimony of scripture. For neither in the Old, nor the New Testament have we an account of any other kind of public meetings held by the righteous, either under the Jewish or Christian Dispensation. One need only refer to such scriptures as the following:—PSALM, LXXXIV, XCII, CXVIII: ISAIAH, LVIII: MATTHEW, XXVIII: JOHN, XX: and ACTS, II.

This last scripture is full of importance, as it sanctions the change made from the seventh to the first day of the week, for the purpose of christian worship; for it was on the christian Sabbath that the Spirit was poured out from on high upon the Apostles, as well as upon John many years afterwards in Patmos. Now the glorious day of Pentecost may be properly regarded as *the model Sabbath*, for the universal church to copy after in all succeeding years. We are sure that on that day no subordinate topics were mingled with repentance, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but that the whole time of the Apostles, and of the church then formed, was occupied in matters that were of a purely spiritual kind. Even so ought it to be throughout every christian Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day, in which above all other days of the week, "the word of Christ is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom," and in which we are to be employed in "teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord:" COL. III, 16. We must join in "spiritual songs," not in mere temperance hymns, some of which are bald enough, and utterly unfit for Sabbath-day singing, if they are worth singing at all. The Sabbath then is not to be divided between the temperance hall and the church or chapel,—between temperance themes and the cross; it is a day sacred to the cross; the day on which Jesus is to be "lifted up that he may draw all men unto him," and on which his resurrection is to be declared with power, that great grace may be upon the Israel of God. Man is so constituted in his mind, that in regard to devotion he cannot ascend and descend at pleasure. There is sufficient difficulty in getting the heart raised to that proper spiritual frame which becomes the worship and sanctuary of God; it is not wise afterwards to come down to a lower region, for we cannot soar again at will. In fact, no truly spiritually-minded christian can attend a Sabbath temperance meeting without sustaining some degree of spiritual loss. Unregenerate men cannot understand this; but let all those who wish to flee from the wrath to come, beware lest a good cause wrongly propagated should prove a snare to their souls. If Satan cannot keep men from the house of God, his cunning is constantly employed in devising means "to catch away that which is sown in the heart," MATTHEW, XIII, 19. This he does on a small scale by unsuitable Sabbath conversation suggested to individuals who do not thoughtfully retire from the house of God; and he would accomplish his purpose on a more extended scale by a public meeting to treat on a subject that would withdraw the mind from the more

exalted themes of the sanctuary. God has set apart this holy day for worship and devotion; nor is it easy to conceive a more specious device than temperance services for desecrating the Sabbath, for by such a scheme men's minds are diverted from a full and undivided attention to what immediately belongs to their present salvation. To shew how unsuitable temperance meetings are to the christian Sabbath, we may borrow an illustration from Jewish history. It is as though one should have taken a part of the congregation of Israel, on the day when the divine glory filled the temple of Solomon, to view some of the quarries from whence the stones which composed the temple had been hewn. That might be well and usefully done at another time; but on that high day it would have been unseemly, for all Israel had nothing to do with any other theme than this:—"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever," 2 CHRON. v. 13.

2. Sabbath temperance meetings violate *the rest*, as well as the sanctity of the Sabbath. The very name of the Sabbath signifies *rest*. And it is to be especially noted that the Hebrews have two words which signify rest, namely Noah and Sabbath, but the latter only is employed to designate the day of the Lord. The former indeed denotes *rest from labour*, as in GEN. v. 29, "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed:" but in addition to that general idea of comfort and repose from trial, the latter word Sabbath imports *rest for sacred and religious purposes*. That single word at once expresses both what we are to rest *from*, and what we are to rest *for*. The meaning of this most appropriate name, Sabbath, is well expressed by DR. WATTS in the following line,
 "Sweet is the day of sacred rest."

It is one entire day of *sacred rest*:—rest from ordinary employments for the religious worship of God, through Christ his Son, by the Holy Spirit. For this reason we conclude that all public meetings that do not strictly accord with the spiritual purposes of this holy day are a violation both of its rest and sanctity. And we apprehend it is from a high regard to the rest which the Sabbath law requires that the great religious bodies of Christendom do not hold any of their public meetings on that day; no christian would desire or approve anything of the kind. We have no Sabbath Missionary meetings, no Sabbath Bible Society meetings, no Sabbath Anti-Slavery meetings, nor ought we to have any Sabbath Temperance meetings. No public meeting can be got up without labour, nor held without offering inducements to individuals to travel from place to place, and very likely causing several to omit a public religious service altogether. Neither speakers nor hearers can avoid either directly violating the rest of the Sabbath themselves, or countenancing that sin in others.

It may be said that religious professors will often travel miles to a love feast, or a charity sermon, or to hear some favourite preacher, so

that after all their zeal in petitioning the legislature against Sabbath-traffic, they have no conscience about Sunday rambles to gratify their sickly religious taste, or their mere caprice. They would have the legislature indeed put an end to Sunday railway travelling ; but then when it suits their will, they can avail themselves of the up-train, or down-train, to go hither and thither after this or that man of renown, leaving their own minister empty pews, instead of devout and praying hearers. Mail coaches should not run : but then they do not object to mount the coach and travel a stage or two ; or, it may be, a little party of them, can hire a conveyance, and away they journey, and perhaps sing hymns like nightingales along the road, while they are desecrating God's holy day of rest ! All this is both lamentably true and deplorably wrong. God be merciful to those novelty-hunters, for they have very little of either sense or grace in them. They are a reproach to their christian profession, instead of "adorning the gospel," and are as thorns in the sides of those faithful servants of Christ, to whose scriptural councils they are too self-willed and headstrong to hearken. If it had not been for such fickle, religious gossipers flitting hither and thither,—any where rather than to the Bible and their closets,—temperance Sabbath meetings as an experiment would never have been thought of. If all who are called religious people were really religious—sober, steady, wise, and christian—and as reverent of the Sabbath as were the Nonconformists and Puritans of a former age, or the primitive disciples of our Lord, the public mind would have been overawed, and no services but religious services in the sanctuary would have had the least chance of success. But because the Sabbath-antinomianism of loose, giddy professors has encouraged the unjustifiable practice, and can ensure more or less of attendance on temperance meetings shall the evil be silently tolerated in the christian world ? God forbid.

We, who are tee-totalers, cannot avail ourselves of any licence to hold such meetings, drawn from the inconsistent practice of a certain class of religionists with whom we are surrounded. For we have stopped our own mouths, and rendered every plea of that kind quite inadmissible. We have lately heard of the petition to Parliament from the Wesleyan, London, and Baptist Missionary societies against the Opium trade in China. And we have marvelled at their inconsistency in holding silence about Gin and Brandy, and Malt at home ! We have felt that the Premier's rebuke of a foreign philanthropy, which is dumb as to the ruin strong drink produces at home was both keen and just. And we have equally felt that a Prime Minister who could justify a wide spreading desolation abroad, on the ground that English revenue was drawn from a similar desolation that was legalized at home, was unmindful of his high responsibility to God, and of that solemn account which he must give in the day of judgement for the exercise of that tremendous power, both in England and China, with which the Most High has entrusted him for the benefit of his fellow men. Alas ! that a British Government should every year derive a considerable portion

of its revenue *from the sale of indulgences* ; verily our Protestantism is hardly begun ! As to the Petitioners, we who are tee-totalers can easily see that as Opium-eaters cannot petition against Opium : so Spirit and Malt-liquor drinkers cannot petition against Malt and Spirits : the Chinese may wail over them, and they over the Chinese ; but neither party can be consistent with themselves till they call in to their aid the principles of tee-totalism ; first practically abstaining from whatsoever intoxicates, *whether drug, or drink*, and then using all their influence to sweep away the accursed thing in all its forms from the face of the whole earth. But now let us bring the same process of reasoning to bear with regard to Sabbath Temperance Meetings, and Sabbath religiously-curious tourists, and we shall see that the one cannot excuse or palliate the other ; but that both evils should be forsaken, that men may every where “rest on the Sabbath day according to the commandment, and attend upon the Lord without distraction :” LUKE XXIII, 56, 1 ; COR. VII, 35.

3. Sabbath Temperance Meetings come in collision with the christian ministry. The Sabbath is not a day for speech making, but for preaching and hearing the gospel. It is a day for the pulpit, and not for the platform, any more than for the orchestra, or the theatre. There is an intimate connection between the divine Sabbath and a divinely appointed and established ministry. So close and intimate is this connection that in the absence of any express record concerning the regular assembly of worshippers on the Sabbath, the historic statement in the scriptures of an existing ministry is quite equivalent to such record, and affords demonstration that the Sabbath was observed notwithstanding the silence of holy scripture on this subject. Thus for example the Sabbath is not mentioned in the Old Testament from Adam to Noah, a period of more than sixteen hundred years. Yet we are informed by Moses that, during a considerable period of that interval, “Enoch walked with God,” GEN. v. 22, 24. St. Paul also testifies that while walking with God, “he had this testimony that he pleased God,” HEB. XI, 5. And the Apostle Jude informs us that he was a public teacher, and gives us the substance of his awakening discourses, “And Enoch also the seventh from Adam prophesied of these saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,” JUDE 14, 15. In like manner St. Peter calls Noah a “Preacher of righteousness, 2 PETER, II. 5. And God himself testifies of him saying “Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation,” GEN. VII, 1. Now by comparing these several scriptures together, we are as certain of the fact, that in those remote ages the Sabbath was regularly kept as a day of religious worship, as if the statement had been formally made in so many words. For if Noah were “a preacher” he must have had a preaching-day, and an assembly of hearers ; if a preacher “of righteousness,” he must have

observed and upheld the Sabbath law, without which he would not have been accounted righteous himself before God, nor have been able to publish righteousness to that sinful generation. In like manner Enoch's powerful denunciations of divine vengeance against transgressors would have been powerless, had he himself been a Sabbath-breaker, nor could he without obedience to the never-failing, and never-intermitted law of the Sabbath, have walked with God, enjoyed the testimony that he pleased him, and been chosen of God to the singular honour of being translated to the Sabbatic rest and worship of heaven. See then how certain it is that our world has never lost the Sabbath since it was first instituted in Eden. And see also how marked and intimate the relation is between God's ministers and God's day.

Indeed the same thought is obvious to the most casual observer. For who does not at once perceive that whereas the Sabbath is to all other men the day of rest, to the preacher of the gospel it is the day of labour. Other men's rest day is his working day. So that God hath given this day to the church and the world that men may have an uninterrupted season for his worship and service, and his ambassadors an uninterrupted and a regularly allotted day for publishing the word of mercy, and of intreating sinners in the stead of Christ "to be reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v, 20. "The word of reconciliation is the burden of the Lord" on that day. It is not therefore a little singular that one who styles himself "a Minister of the Gospel" should profess to justify any other kind of proclamation to the people on the day of the Lord. But in truth, it must be stated, that in the tract which he has circulated, he scarcely touches the subject. For though it is entitled "The Propriety of holding Sabbath day Temperance Meetings considered," which would at once awaken an interest in the mind to know what the tract contains on that point, yet one reads on without finding that topic so much as mentioned till we come to the last page. All that goes before relates only to the subject of intemperance in general, which indeed may be true enough in itself, but has no connection with the subject that should have been discussed. After filling up all his preceding pages with merely general matter, our author comes in the last page to inform us that he "*had intended* to have given this enquiry a good degree of prominency" but that "his space is almost occupied." But surely when he failed of his "intention," he should have altered his title-page, and not catch people to purchase his tract by an exhibition of false colours. For in the whole pamphlet there are not above half-a-dozen sentences on the subject which a stranger would expect to find fully, and almost exclusively discussed. And when our author does approach the subject, he writes as though he felt he was venturing on dangerous ground. "I shall not defend" says he, "all Sabbath meetings indiscriminately. If we have Sunday meetings we must have Sunday speakers, and Sunday speeches." Now such an admission is fatal to the whole Sunday desecration scheme. For Sunday is not a day for speeches at all; it is for prayer, devotion, singing, and hearing the

word of God. "Sunday speeches" have never had an existence since the world began, and no man can conjure them into being. The two words are self-contradictory. And as to "Sunday speakers" neither can they be found. Whoever walks with God, as Enoch did, and hath the testimony that he pleases him, though he should not be as Enoch was in the ministry, will have an inward consciousness, proceeding from the secret monitions of the Holy Ghost, that he cannot without sin, speak in a public meeting, even in advocacy of the temperance cause on that sacred day. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," ROM. VIII, 14. So that as "Sunday speakers" will be wanting, the whole Sunday management will be in the hands of *mere* temperance pleaders, to the irreparable damage of the truly excellent temperance cause. Here and there a *professedly* religious man might come in with a smattering of the language of Canaan; but no man who has the life of God in his soul would have either ease or enjoyment in the service. As to christian ministers making temperance speeches on the Sabbath day that is quite out of the question. Their full time and energies are wanted for higher ends. The closet, the family, and the pulpit, are the only fit places for the minister of Christ on the Sabbath day, unless indeed the sick and dying, or any other portion of his flock, require his spiritual consolation, counsel or prayer. It would soon go ill with the church of Christ, if ministers were to appear as public characters any where but in the pulpit on the holy day of the Lord. If then it be absolutely certain that temperance meetings cannot insure on the Sabbath day the services of any class of true Sabbath men, whether they be ministers or private christians, where are "Sunday speeches" to come from?

In some places Sunday temperance prayer meetings have been held. This is also a device of the enemy. It tends to dissociate the temperance cause from the sanctuary, though it carries a shew of religion. It is marvellous that even such as fear God should sometimes have so little spiritual discernment, and be so "ignorant of Satan's devices," 2 COR. II, 11. Let as many as believe that total abstinence from strong drink is the true christian temperance, and promotive of christianity, beware how they furnish opponents—pious opponents I mean—with a really rational objection against their conduct; for the objection rationally taken against that part of their conduct will be carried further than it will rationally go, and be made to bear against the system of tee-totalism altogether. On the Sabbath day the old place of prayer should be resorted to, and the most cordial and spiritual union with our christian brethren maintained and promoted. The fact is, we are not to convert the Sabbath day into a temperance day, or any other day than that which God himself has appointed, for that would be quite to change its character, and pervert the holy design of its original institution. And if we are not at liberty to change the character of the entire day, neither we are at liberty to change the character of *one or two hours of the day*, by making them temperance

hours instead of Sabbath hours. There is about as much christianity in this, as in French papists going to mass in the morning and the theatre at night ; or in the English protestants shutting up shop, tavern, or ale-house, in church hours, and partially opening them for common and ordinary purposes afterwards. God doth not leave the Sabbath to be parcelled out between him and ourselves by the chiming of the church bells. *The principle is false and unchristian*:—he claims *the whole day* for his own service, and will have no labourers employed in it, but such as immediately relate to the gospel and the salvation of men. All other labourers on that day invade his prerogative, encroach on the services of the sanctuary, and are in opposition to the calling and end of the christian ministry.

4. Sabbath Temperance Meetings interfere with the retirement of the Sabbath. It is of the utmost importance to the vital interests of christianity that portions of the holy Sabbath should be spent in secret communion with God. In the same Psalm in which David saith, "But as for me I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy ; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple," he saith just before "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." And again, "Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation," PSALM V, 1, 3, 7. So also in another Psalm, in which he distinctly speaks of the christian Sabbath, saying, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it," he saith, "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly," PSALM CXVIII, 15, 24. Thus we are taught that private devotion, and family rejoicing, are to be intermingled with sanctuary worship on the day of the Lord. What little leisure may remain should be devoted to reading and meditation. But holy care should be taken that the reading on the Sabbath be properly and exclusively Sabbath day reading. It must not be *political*. Of course no christian will cast his eyes upon a newspaper on that holy day. It shall not be seen in all his dwellings, even though it be a respectably and religiously conducted paper, it will be put out of sight, and not lie about so as to expose children or servants to the temptation of looking into it. As to that great abomination and disgrace of this christian country, a professedly Sunday newspaper, no godly man will allow such a curse on any day of the week to come within the walls of his house, not though it were conducted with the highest ability the country could furnish. Neither should Sabbath reading be *literary or philosophical*; our business on that day is not with science but salvation ; we are not to "think our own thoughts," but to be wholly given up to the divine employment of seeking the face of God. Nor should it be *merely moral*. Though our excellent temperance publications are calculated to do much good, and should be widely circulated for reading on other days, yet are they not adapted for Sabbath reading, any more than temperance discourses are

for Sabbath worship. Nor should it be *polemical* divinity. The Sabbath is not the day for studying religious controversies, but for gaining "holiness without which no man can see the Lord." Nor should it be *miscellaneous*,—reading anything that may come to hand when we open the religious periodicals of the day. *All* that is contained in the Wesleyan or other Magazines, is not suitable for the Sabbath; for however profitable religious biography may be, the reviews, and other secondary articles take us into too low a region on the day of God. Nothing should be read that is not directly spiritual and hallowing: indeed, one might say, as a sure and safe rule, the Bible exclusively, or nearly so. It would be a happy thing for the church of Christ, if the love and veneration for the Holy Scriptures were so profound, that the people every where on the Sabbath day thirsted for nothing but the word of God, read in secret, or in the family, and expounded in the public congregation.

It is deeply to be regretted that in the present age there is so little inclination, and sometimes so little leisure for retirement on the Sabbath day. We are almost smothered under a load of what are called means of grace. We have need to see well to it that they really be, and really prove means of grace; lest an incessant call to public duties of a religious kind should actually hinder grace, by promoting a disinclination to secret prayer, and a devout searching of the Scriptures in our own habitation. It is easier and more pleasant for a man to do anything in public, than it is to enter into his closet, and diligently examine his heart before God. In many cases there is far too much religious bustle on God's holy day of rest. If then we are already overdone with a multitude of means that are more or less religious, what room is there for Sunday Temperance Meetings? The best part of the community have their hands quite full of religious employment, and cannot attend them if they would; indeed they have need rather to escape from than augment their Sunday engagements; for throughout the whole length and breadth of the land, according to the existing order of things there are far too many empty closets on the Sabbath day. This is one principle reason why public instruction is comparatively so unavailing, and ignorance still broods so heavily over the public mind. Our rising population want the education of the closet, as much as the education of the Sunday school, and the teaching of the ministry; so that the last thing in the world to be wished for by a christian is any new institution or meeting on the Sabbath day, of any kind whatsoever, even though it were strictly and exclusively religious. It is therefore impossible not to feel the utmost repugnance to any public meeting that is not in accordance with the Sabbath institute, or suited to the dignity and holiness of that divine and heavenly day.

5. Sabbath Temperance Meetings are unsanctioned by the example of the Lord of the Sabbath,—Jesus Christ "is Lord of the

Sabbath day," MARK II, 28, an appellation which contains a claim to real and essential divinity, for no mere creature could assume that title without blasphemy. He only who is eternal could claim to be the lord of any portion of time, of any day, and much less of the day of worship, which hath been sanctified from the beginning for the adoration and praise of the only true and living God. But as man, Christ was subject to the Sabbatic law; and in his perfect obedience "he magnified that law and made it honourable, ISAIAH XLII, 21. His teaching and example give us the true christian doctrine concerning the Sabbatic institute. Both must be considered conjointly, and in the light which they reflect on each other, that we may understand both the limit and extent of our christian duty. In the days of his flesh there was a pharisaic strictness observed on some minute points which ill accorded with the mercy of the Sabbath. This our Lord opposed, as in the case of the disciples who plucked the ears of corn, and the diseased whom he cured on that day. But in our times, the danger lies not in pharisaic strictness, in keeping the letter of the law in such a way as to nullify its spirit, but in a lax and antinomian perversion of our gracious Redeemer's interpretation, so as to make "Christ himself the minister of sin," GAL. II, 17. We are very ingenious in *inventing* necessities, and very *plausible* in concerting our schemes into purposes of utility. Because Jesus Christ in his wise comparison, justified the disciples in rubbing out ears of corn which their real hunger constituted an act of necessity, like that of David's when "he was an hungred, he, and they that were with him," we can plead for the employment of our servants in cooking for us a plentiful meal for our Sabbath dinner, while our domestics are kept from the morning service, though there is neither hunger nor necessity in the case, but only a pampered appetite to be gratified. A comfortable dinner must be had, whether the morning sermon be heard or not. And thus with a part of the family, the rest of the Sabbath does not begin till noon is past; and the rest of the half of it that remains is marred and rendered unprofitable by the fatigue and weariness that ensue. No christian servant should remain in a family however considerable the advantages of the service, where her or his christian liberties are infringed on upon God's holy day. No christian wife should obey her husband in domestic arrangements that interfere with the claims of an enlightened conscience with regard to this day. If indeed we are full of worldly compliances, and for the sake of peace, will compromise with the unregenerate, or with the professedly religious, in matters of high practical religious importance, we may well enough avoid persecutions, but we shall not live godly in Christ Jesus.

Now the same principle of antinomianism that abuses our Lord's plea for his necessitous disciples doth in another form pervert his gracious cures which he wrought on the Sabbath day. When our Lord healed the man in the synagogue who had the withered hand, he decided "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath days," MARK III, 4, whence some would infer that we do good by holding temperance

meetings, wherefore it is lawful to hold such meetings on the Sabbath. This logic however cometh from beneath ; it savours of him who said to our Lord " It is written," that he might employ the language of scripture to seduce into transgression. We must reply as did our Lord with " It is written *again*," and interpret scripture by scripture that we may have a sound knowledge of all the revealed will of God. Let us then take a brief survey of the life and labours of our blessed Lord, so far as they bear on this present subject.

While sojourning amongst the children of men, after he entered on his public ministry, he was constantly employed in doing good. And he constantly honoured the Sabbath, and was found worshipping and teaching in the synagogue, the house of prayer. *It was not his ordinary day for working miracles of benevolence*, otherwise the Pharisees would not " have watched him whether he would heal on the Sabbath day that they might accuse him," MARK III, 2, for then the fact would have been settled in hundreds of cases before, and they would have been previously furnished with the matter of accusation which they desired. But Christ never encouraged the people to congregate around him, with the sick and diseased, to be cured on that day. Whoever attentively reads the Gospels, and notices the times, places, and circumstances of his miracles, will at once perceive the truth of this assertion. There was no public resort of the people to him on the Sabbath even for such a benevolent purpose ; all the great occasions when the multitude followed him, and thronged to touch the hem of his garment, were on the other days of the week. Yet in our times, of general religious profession, the instances are not few, in which persons a little disordered in their health, will stay at home on the Sunday to take physic, rather than loose a day's wages, or be hindered in a day's business. And so from worldly considerations, the Sabbath is converted into a physicking day, and the worship of God is neglected. This betrays a sad state of heart. What is that man's religion worth, who would not rather forego a week's wages, or a week's business, employment, or profit, than loose one holy Sabbath's enjoyment of communion with the Lord ? Let not such persons be deceived and talk about their conversion, and experience, or anything of that kind ; but let them seek *that conversion* that will enable them with truth to adopt the language of the eighty-fourth Psalm as their own. The Sabbath was never intended, either to physic the living or bury the dead, unless in cases where life and health are concerned. Convenience and worldly advantages are quite other considerations.

Neither was our Lord wont to retire into the wilderness to feed the hungry, or even to withdraw to a mountain to preach to multitudes on the Sabbath day. MATTHEW V, VI, VII, was a week day sermon. Christ would not set up worship against worship, nor encourage any assembling of the people together that would interfere with the regularly established worship of the house of God. No such charge was ever preferred against him. It appears therefore that these cures

which he performed on the Sabbath, *were special cases*, wrought favour of individuals, and justified by the circumstances and occasions which gave rise to his putting forth in their behalf his gracious and healing power. So that here we may apply the common remark—The exception proves the rule. We have but four Sabbath cures recorded in the gospels. Two of these were performed *in the synagogue*, whither the afflicted had repaired to worship, MARK III, 1—5, and LUKE XIII, 11—17. One was near the temple, JOHN V, 1—16. And the other was the healing of a blind man whom our Lord found in the way, JOHN IX. In each of these four instances the Pharisees urged the same objection against Christ, namely he keepeth not the Sabbath day: but all the rest of his miracles were free from that objection on their part, though they frequently sought on other grounds to invalidate their character. So that a calm investigation of our blessed Lord's example brings us to this conclusion, that though he did not decline to heal individuals who had need of it on the Sabbath, he held *no public meeting* for that purpose, they were special cures wrought either in a quiet unobserved manner, or in connexion with the public worship of God: but other kind of public meeting than that which belonged to the sanctuary had no sanction from him. There is nothing like it to be found in the record of him who hath "left us an example that we should follow his steps." 1 PETER II, 21.

On the whole then we conclude that the "doing well" of which our Lord spake must be interpreted in accordance with the connection in which it stands, and in harmony with the facts and doctrines which are clearly stated in other scriptures; and then it will be found that the "doing well on the Sabbath day" which our Lord had in view was the doing an act of mercy towards the body or soul of a poor afflicted fellow creature in such a manner as to connect our work and our working with the sanctuary of God. So that if a christian teetotaler should visit a sick neighbour, or call upon a poor drunkard, or a reformed character, and invite him to accompany him to the house of prayer; or seeing him there, should, when the service closes privately labour to impress his heart with the great truths he has been hearing, he would be acting in character, for by thus harrowing in the seed sown, he would be furthering the work of the minister in a manner suited to the sanctity of the christian Sabbath. But if public teetotal meetings were called the reverse would be the case. Some persons would attend them *instead of the house of God*, and teetotalism with them would be put in the place of christianity and christian worship. Others might attend them as well as the house of God. But neither before nor after a sermon would the discussions be in any wise helpful to the truths delivered from the pulpit. So that, though looking at such meetings in a one-sided, partial, and abstract manner, merely as an effort to reclaim or preserve men from the sin of drunkenness, they might be called "doing well," yet, when viewed in association with time, place, day, and circumstances, it is impossible not to see that in countenancing them we should be *doing ill*, and be in danger of "wresting the scripture to our own destruction," 2 PETER II, 16.

I will conclude with putting on record one of the happiest practical expositions of the christian law of the Sabbath that has ever fallen under my observation. It will be readily admitted that men who are skilled in the healing art are worthy of honour, for they are a blessing to the community. They hold a honourable station in society, and tho' they cannot work miracles, they are often instrumental in healing the sick, and lessening the sum of human woe. Yet in too many instances they are wanting in christian principle, and make their profession an excuse for habitually neglecting the house of God. But I know a christian surgeon, whom I shall ever love and esteem as my friend, residing in a part of the kingdom far remote from Lancashire, whose conduct is worthy of universal imitation. When brought to feel the necessity of personal salvation, the holy Spirit soon taught him his duty as a public man, and soon as he saw the way he walked in it, and communicated to me the steadfast purpose of his heart. He considered it to be his duty to secure as large a portion of the rest of the Sabbath as possible for his own spiritual benefit. Therefore he resolved to visit no patients on that day, except in cases of real necessity; but such visits he conceived to be obligatory upon him, and to come within the rule of "doing well on the Sabbath day." But he felt further convinced that from cases of necessity on the Sabbath he ought not to reap any pecuniary emolument but attend upon them solely as acts of mercy. Accordingly he kept a distinct entry of such professional Sabbath visits, and gave the whole amount of the emoluments accruing from that source to the Missionary cause, or to some other useful and christian institution. And so well did he manage even those visits that it was a rare thing to see him either absent, or late in his attendance on the public worship of Almighty God. Thus we see that there is a wisdom that is vouchsafed from on high to the individual christian which is profitable to direct in the exact path of duty. And if that wisdom be communicated to the friends of the total abstinence cause, they will see and feel that there is no "propriety" in "holding Sabbath day Temperance Meetings," but that they are unscriptural as Sabbath exercises, because they are not suited to the high purposes and designs of that spiritual and holy day. The Scriptures recognize no public assembly but for public christian worship, as it is written in the hundreth Psalm, which contains a summary of all that relates to God and his sanctuary on the blessed Sabbath:—

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
- 2 Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.
- 3 Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
- 4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name.
- 5 For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

